Tips for the Young Bike Riders in Your Family

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports that 85 million adults and children ride their bikes every day. Most communities have bike safety programs that encourage motorists and cyclists to share the road safely and promote the use of bike helmets. However, despite education and outreach efforts, accidents happen. Every year, 500,000 cyclists end up making an emergency room visit, according to NHTSA.

Protect your children by sharing these 12 tips for bicycle safety—and refresh your own knowledge of bike safety:

- Tell an adult if anything is broken or wrong with your bike.
- Always wear a bicycle safety helmet.
- Wear brightly colored clothing so that others can see you better.
- Remember—one seat, only one rider!
- Keep both hands on handlebars.
- Walk your bike across busy intersections.
- Look left, right, left for traffic at stop signs and driveways before riding out into the street.
- Obey traffic signs and lights.
- Ride on the right-hand side of the street in the same direction as the flow of automobile traffic.
- Always use hand signals when stopping or turning.
- Be aware of surrounding traffic.
- When riding with others, ride single file.
Kids Speak Out on Bike Helmets

In investigating why kids do or don’t wear bike helmets, AAA went straight to the source. We asked 282 kids, ages 8 - 13, about their habits and attitudes when it comes to wearing bike helmets.

More than half of the young bike riders we surveyed do not consistently wear helmets—and usage in our group was higher than the national average of 15 percent. This is a troubling statistic, because each year, more than 500,000 children go to hospital emergency rooms or doctors’ offices due to bicycle injuries.

Collisions happen most frequently on neighborhood streets, sidewalks or playgrounds. Children between 5 and 14 have the highest rate of injury for all bicycle riders.

The young riders surveyed were also asked why they wore helmets, how often, and how they might persuade their friends to wear their helmets. Based on their responses, it seems that overall they do understand the potential for serious injury if they did not wear helmets. To get friends to wear helmets, their suggestions included celebrity endorsements and redesigns to make helmets to make them more comfortable and fashionable.

AAA also shared some ideas to create strong community support for bike helmets, as well as important safety tips for cyclists:

- Always wear a bike helmet.
- Stop and check traffic before riding into the street.
- Don’t ride at night.
- Obey traffic signs and signals.
- Ride on the right-hand side of the street.
- Check your brakes before riding.
- Give cars and pedestrians the right of way.
- Wear light or bright-colored clothing so that motorists can see you.
- Be extra careful turning left—motorists don’t expect it.
- Avoid broken pavement, loose gravel and leaves—all of which can cause you to lose control of your bike.
TAKE THE BICYCLE SAFETY QUIZ

These 20 questions can determine how up-to-speed you are on bicycle safety. Print this page to test your bicycle safety knowledge and increase your safety IQ.

1. A bicyclist should always stop and yield before entering a street.  
2. If the cyclist is careful, a bicycle in poor condition is considered safe to ride.  
3. Keep to the right when driving your bike in the street.  
4. When two or more people are riding their bicycles in a street, they should ride in single file.  
5. Traffic signs and signals are only for motorists.  
6. Cyclists should ride slowly and be cautious when near people.  
7. Bicycle drivers should practice their skills in a safe area, away from traffic.  
8. Hand signals you give before making a turn tell people that you can steer your bike with one hand.  
9. It is wise to get off of your bike and walk it across busy streets.  
10. If you have to drive at night, people will see you better if your bike has a front light, side and rear reflectors, and if you wear retro-reflective clothing.  
11. It is OK to carry a passenger on your handlebars.  
12. Wearing a helmet is only important when riding at faster speeds.  
13. The seat of a bike is the right height if, when you sit on it, you can touch the ground with toes of both feet.  
14. Only automobiles are required to make a complete stop at a stop sign.  
15. Bicyclist must yield the right-of-way to pedestrians.  
16. Most states require at least a proper headlight, a red rear reflector, and side reflectors of you drive at night or when it is hard to see.  
17. It's safe to drive across a residential street intersection without slowing down or stopping.  
18. It is better to choose a different route that is less hazardous than to drive in heavy and dangerous traffic.  
19. It's often difficult for a motorist to see someone on a bicycle.  
20. Developing good bicycle habits, will lead to better automobile driving habits.
BICYCLE SAFETY QUIZ ANSWERS

1. **TRUE.** Always stop and look left-right-left before entering the roadway. Look left first because it is the lane with the most immediate threat. Next, look to the right as that is the lane that you are turning into. When there is no traffic approaching from the right, you are almost ready to proceed. You should now look left again because traffic may have changed while you were looking to the right. If it is clear, you may proceed. As you commit to entering the road, check to the right as you begin your turn or crossing to make sure it is still clear.

2. **FALSE.** Like automobiles, bicycles require routine maintenance to keep them operating properly and in safe riding condition. Get into the habit of cleaning and inspecting your bike on a regular basis. You or your parents can make minor adjustments, but use a repair shop for more complex problems. Keep your brakes oiled, make sure your bike frame is intact, replace any worn or cracked reflectors, keep tires inflated to the correct pressure and make sure your wheels do not wobble.

3. **TRUE.** The rules of the road apply to bicyclists as well. Be sure to ride with traffic as close to the right edge of the road as possible—when sidewalks and bike paths are not available—so traffic can move safely around you.

4. **TRUE.** When you are part of a cycling group, be sure to ride single file—not side-by-side—so traffic can pass you safely.

5. **FALSE.** Traffic signs, signals and pavement markings apply to bicyclists, too. Bicyclists must follow the directions given by police officers and crossing guards. Stop at all stop signs, obey traffic signals, and use caution around flashing yellow lights. Pay particular attention when entering the roadway and watch for turning vehicles as you ride.

6. **FALSE.** Using proper hand signals helps alert other road users of your intentions for a change in direction.

7. **TRUE.** If you are a new rider or plan to ride an unfamiliar bike, the key is to practice riding in a safe area without traffic, before you get into a real-life traffic situation. Your family can also be a helpful or check with local organizations for training programs designed for new riders. A general rule of thumb, always wear your helmet and other elbow and knee safety gear to protect against unforeseen injury. Begin on a dry, clean level area away from traffic and free from obstructions. Practice your balance, circling, braking and control skills. Also practice turning your head without swerving to simulate looking behind for approaching traffic. Later, continue to improve your handling skills by riding on gravel or wet surfaces. If you’re already an accomplished rider, it’s always good to take a refresher course to ensure you are observing safe bicycling rules and current regulations.

8. **FALSE.** Carrying passengers on a bike meant for one rider is dangerous. Your balance and ability to steer and see clearly can be impaired. Remember—one seat, one rider!

9. **FALSE.** You should wear a bike helmet on every bike ride, no matter how short or slow you ride. In the event of a crash, a helmet that fits properly reduces the risk of brain injury by almost 90 percent.
13. **TRUE.** If you bike is too big, it can be hard to control. If it is too small, it could create other problems. You need to be able to reach the ground with the balls of your feet to maintain your balance when stopped and have ultimate control over your bike. To check the size of your bike, sit on the seat with your legs straddling over the center bar. Grip the handlebars with both hands and rise up on the balls of your feet. While standing in this position, you should have one or two inches of clearance between you and the center bar. Never buy a bike that is too large with the idea that you'll grow into it.

14. **FALSE.** The rules of the road and all signs, signals and markings apply to bicyclists, too. Be sure to make complete stops at all stop signs, lights and before entering the roadway from a driveway or a side street.

15. **TRUE.** Be sure to slow down and yield to pedestrians. They have the right of way when traffic control signals are not in place or not in operation at a crosswalk. Vehicles and bicyclists should yield the right of way, slowing down or stopped if need be to yield to a pedestrian crossing the roadway.

16. **TRUE.** Visibility is important to ensure motorists can see you at night. If you must ride at night, be sure to have reflectors, lights and retro-reflective material on your clothing.

17. **FALSE.** Always stop and look left-right-left before entering the roadway. Vehicles may not be able to stop in time to avoid a collision if you enter the roadway suddenly in their path. Be sure to cross in designated sidewalks if available.

18. **TRUE.** Riding in less congested areas, or on designated bike paths will minimize your risk of potential hazards. Plan your route before you leave home and let your family know where you are going, a number where you can be reached and what time they can expect you back.

19. **TRUE.** It can be difficult for motorists to see bikes, particularly in low light situations. Be sure to have reflectors on your bike, wear bright clothing and alert motorists to your intentions by using proper hand signals. Many collisions occur while motorists make turns and do not see a bicyclist going straight. Another common collision happens when a driver opens their door and does not see the bicyclist approaching.

20. **TRUE.** Your bicycle is your first vehicle. The rules of the road also apply to bicyclists. Be sure to develop good driving habits that will stay with our through your driving years. Remember, riding your bike is a freedom and a privilege; keep safety first in mind.